

A TWELFTH-CENTURY DESCRIPTION OF ST. SOPHIA*

CYRIL MANGO and JOHN PARKER

THE short composition which, as far as can be ascertained, is here published for the first time, is to be found on folios 123r-124v of the Escorial codex Y-II-10. The general character of the work is sufficiently indicated by its title; it is an *ekphrasis* or rhetorical description¹ of the great church of St. Sophia, or rather, of certain selected features of that building, delivered on the occasion of the annual festival of the *encaenia* or inauguration of the church. This festival commemorated Justinian I's re-inauguration of the building in 563, after the repair of the damage it had suffered in the earthquake of 557,² and was celebrated annually on 23 December, according to the ninth-century *Typicon of the Great Church* and the *Synaxarium of Constantinople*.³

The author, Michael, *protecdicus* of the church of Thessalonica and later deacon of St. Sophia, *maistôr tôn rhêtorôn* and *oikoumenikos didaskalos* (i. e. Rector of the Patriarchal Academy), is chiefly known for a number of other rhetorical pieces which are to be found in the same codex—three of which,

* The introduction, edition of the Greek text, and translation are the work of Mr. Parker. Mr. Mango has revised the translation and written the commentary.

¹ On the *ekphrasis* generally as a literary genre, see P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius* (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 83-103; Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, 2nd. ed. (Munich, 1897), pp. 414, 454-6; A. Muñoz, "Alcune fonti letterarie per la storia dell' arte bizantina," *Nuovo Bull. di archeol. crist.*, X (1904), pp. 221-32; G. Downey, "Ekphrasis," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, IV, cols. 921-44.

² See E. M. Antoniadès, "Ἐκφρασις τῆς Ἀγίας Σοφίας," I (Athens-Leipzig, 1907), p. 21; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, pt. 1, vol. III (Paris, 1953), p. 473.

³ A. Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie liturgičeskich rukopisej*, I (Kiev, 1895), p. 34: December 23: καὶ τὰ ἐγκαίνια τῆς ἀγιωτάτης μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας. *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*: Propylaeum ad AASS Novembris, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1902), col. 340: τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ τὰ ἐγκαίνια τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας.

encomiastic addresses to the Emperor Manuel I, were published by W. Regel in 1892⁴ and for his connection with the theological controversy about the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice stirred up by Soterichus Panteugenēs, patriarch-elect of Antioch, in 1155-7.⁵ Michael was one of the principal supporters of Panteugenēs' contention that the sacrifice was offered not to all the members of the Trinity—since the Son could not properly be thought of as offering himself to himself—but only to the Father and the Holy Spirit; for these views he was condemned, together with his associates, by the synod which Manuel I convened, on 26 January 1156, to deal with the matter.⁶ According to Cinnamus and Nicetas Choniates the synod went on to depose the convicted heretics.⁷ A confession and recantation of his errors, signed by Michael and apparently read by him to the synod, has survived,⁸ and the title of this also clearly states that he was deposed (καθηρέθη); but in the text Michael declares

⁴ *Fontes rerum byzantinorum*, I (St. Petersburg, 1892), nos. VIII-X, pp. 131-82.

⁵ For this matter v. F. Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène et Manuel I Comnène* (Paris, 1912), pp. 640-3; M. Jugie in *Dict. de théologie catholique*, X, 2, cols. 1337-8.

⁶ Cinnamus, ed. Bonn, IV 16, p. 177; Nicetas Choniates, ed. Bonn, VII 5, pp. 275-6; *id.*, *Thesaurus Orthodoxiae*, Migne, PG 140, cols. 137-201; V. Grumel, *Les regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, I, iii (Kadiköy, 1947), nos. 1038, 1040; Chalandon, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

⁷ Cinnamus, *loc. cit.*; Nic. Chon., *loc. cit.*; *Thesaurus*, PG 140, col. 140 A.

⁸ The text is known to exist in two MSS: Parisinus graecus 228, fols. 17v-18, and Vaticanus graecus 690, fols. 217-217v. It has been edited from the former by Leo Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis et Orientalis perpetua consensione* (Cologne, 1648), bk. II, chap. xiii, col. 691. That it is not a death-bed repentance, as would appear from the title (ἡ περὶ τὴν τελευταίην ἐξομολόγησιν), but that it was presented to the synod, is clear from the text. V. Laurent (*Dict. de theol. cath.*, X, 2, col. 1720) suggests the emendation of τελευταίην το τελευταίην.

that he has abandoned his former wrong beliefs and entirely concurs in the views of the synod, which he humbly begs to forgive him and to pray for him. A note appended to this recantation in the manuscripts reads "it appears from this document that he was not deposed, although common report has it so" (καίτοι λόγος περί τούτου κρατεῖ). This was ridiculed by Allatius⁹ in view of the statements by Cinnamus and Nicetas; but in recent years V. Grumel has upheld the view that the only person to be deposed as a result of this controversy was Soterichus Panteugenēs himself.¹⁰

Nothing of Michael's subsequent career seems to be known. The archbishop of Thessalonica of that name, who, according to the *synodicon* of that city,¹¹ succeeded Basil of Ochrida soon after the synod which dealt with the errors of Panteugenēs, has been thought by some to have been the same person as the orator; but, as V. Laurent has shown, this identity cannot be proved.¹²

This *ekphrasis* is to be dated about the middle of the twelfth century; it is not possible to be more precise than this. Michael had arrived in the capital, presumably from his native Thessalonica, some time before 1147, and appears, from his own words elsewhere, to have risen to his position as *oikoumenikos didaskalos* after some ten years of teaching in the Patriarchal Academy.¹³ These data hardly furnish a definite *terminus a quo* for dating this composition; nor does the speech itself contain any internal evidence that might be of help. If Michael was not in fact deprived of his dignities in 1156, he may well have produced this effusion some time afterwards. All that can be said is that it was spoken, in St. Sophia (as several passages make clear) two days before Christmas, probably some time in the late 1140's or 1150's.

The speech itself is plainly a *pièce d'occasion*; it would be interesting to know whether it was customary at any time in the twelfth

century for such panegyrical descriptions of the Great Church to be delivered as part of the *encaenia* ceremonies. No other such work seems to have survived, however, and there is nothing in any other source to suggest that speeches of this kind were an annual event.

The present one is a curious production in many ways. The original ending is almost certainly lost; it is hard to believe that the abrupt and indecisive conclusion in the manuscript can have been used by a practiced orator and *maistōr tōn rhētorōn* to round off his address. The breathless manner in which the discourse jumps about from one salient feature of the building to another raises the possibility that Michael's speech has been condensed in other places as well.

However, the text as transmitted in this manuscript is, for the most part, clear and intelligible as to its substance, although the language is extremely flowery and the imagery often somewhat strained, as is generally true of Byzantine *ekphraseis* of this nature, whether in prose or in verse. The geometrical subtleties which the orator has woven into his very complicated observations about the atrium and into his remarks about the roof of the church, which he analyses into two spheres of different sizes, the snatches of cosmology with which he garnishes his description of the arches, the trinitarian symbolism which he extracts from the reference to the doors at the west end, together with his rather conventional Homeric reminiscences, all bear witness to a variously-stocked academic mind. As both *didaskalos tou euangelion* and *maistōr tōn rhētorōn* Michael was a teacher with a fairly wide range of subjects; F. Fuchs has shown that the holder of the latter office generally instructed in philosophy as well as in rhetoric, and the secular sciences as well as theology were regularly taught at the Patriarchal Academy during the twelfth century.¹⁴

The codex from which this speech is here printed has been fully described by Emmanuel Miller in his catalogue of the Greek MSS of the Escorial,¹⁵ by Krumbacher,¹⁶ Regel¹⁷ and others. It is a quarto volume

⁹ *Op. cit.*, col. 692.

¹⁰ Grumel, *Regestes*, no. 1038.

¹¹ See L. Petit, "Le Synodicon de Thessalonique," *Echos d'Orient*, XVIII (1918), pp. 245, 253.

¹² Laurent, *loc. cit.*

¹³ See F. Fuchs, *Die höheren Schulen von Konstantinopel im Mittelalter*, Byzantinisches Archiv, 8 (Leipzig, 1926), p. 36 and note 12.

¹⁴ Fuchs, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 47.

¹⁵ E. Miller, *Catalogue des MSS grecs de la bibliothèque de l'Escorial* (Paris, 1848), p. 200.

¹⁶ Krumbacher, *op. cit.*, pp. 470-6.

¹⁷ Regel, *op. cit.*, pp. iii-v.

which now contains 536 folios, but pages have been lost from both the beginning and the end. The contents are made up entirely of rhetorical pieces, short epideictic essays, and letters; with very few exceptions they all date from the period 1140–1200. Krumbacher thought that the collection must have been brought together before the fall of Constantinople in 1204 with the aim of providing an anthology of the most admired examples of the rhetoric and *belles-lettres* of the period, possibly for future study and use by court orators. The codex is written in a distinctive hand which bears a close resemblance to that of Ambros. gr. 350 and 352, two manuscripts containing works by Nicholas Mesarites;¹⁸

¹⁸ Specimen pages from Ambros. gr. 352 (F 96 sup.) are reproduced by A. Heisenberg, *Nikolaos Mesarites, Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos* (Würzburg, 1907); *id.*, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, II (Leipzig, 1908), pl. II.

Fol. Εκφρασις τῆς ἀγιοτάτης τοῦ Θεοῦ
123^F μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας, λεχθεῖσα ἐν τῷ
καιρῷ τῶν ἐγκαινίων τῆς αὐτῆς ἀγιο-
τάτης ἐκκλησίας παρὰ τοῦ σοφωτάτου
διακόνου καὶ διδασκάλου τῶν εὐαγ-
γελίων κυροῦ Μιχαὴλ τοῦ τοῦ (sic)
Θεσσαλονίκης, τοῦ καὶ μαίστωρος
τῶν ῥητόρων γεγονότος.

1. Ὁ γε μὴν ἐγκαινιζόμενος οἶκος οὗτος
ὡς μὲν καινὸς ἐν Χριστῷ καὶ τῷ τῆς λατρείας
λόγῳ μὴ παλαιούμενος, ἀλλ' ἐν ταύτῳ δια-
μένων καὶ διατελέσων ἐξῆς, κἂν ἐπιχάνωσι
5 τούτῳ πύλαι θανάτου, τὰ τῶν αἱρετικῶν
στόματα, ὡς δὲ καινὸς καὶ τῷ θαύματι,
μέγιστος οὕτω κατὰ τὰ ὄρη μεταρσιούμενος,
καὶ πάντα κάτω προλείπων ὅσα τέχνη λα-
βοῦσα χεῖρας δημιουργεῖ, καὶ κάλλιστος οὐ-
10 τω στίλβων καὶ μετὰ γῆρας, ὡς εἰ καὶ ὑπὲρ
τὸν χρόνον ὑψοῦτο, καὶ εἰς τὸ τούτου ῥεῖθρον
οὐκ ἔβαπτεν· ὃς καὶ πυρράζει τὴν ὄψιν ὡς
ὕγροτης διὰ τὸν πάντῃ χρυσόν. τὴν μὲν οὖν
ἐν Χριστῷ διηνεκὴ καινότητα τούτου, κἂν
15 ἐγκαινιζῇται νῦν, ὀφθαλμοῖς ἔστι θεωρεῖν
ψυχικοῖς, τὸ δ' αἰεὶ καινὸν τοῦ θάμβους καὶ
ἀνεξάλλακτον καὶ τοῖς θαμίζουσιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ,
ὁ μεγέθει καὶ σχήματι καὶ τῷ τῆς ὕλης τιμίῳ

there is much contraction and abbreviation, and the letter-forms abound in cursive flourishes. The writing is dated to the thirteenth century by Miller and Krumbacher, and to the fourteenth by Regel; the earlier date would seem the more probable on palaeographic grounds.

In our transcription of the Greek text we have respected the spelling of the manuscript except for the accentuation. The marginal notes which are of no interest (they consist of the usual ὠρ(αῖον), ση(μείωσαι), ζήτ(ει), and *lemnisci*) have been omitted, and no account has been taken of the punctuation of the manuscript. The division into paragraphs is our own. It has been our aim to keep the translation as close to the Greek as possible; if it suffers from obscurity and pomposity, the blame for these faults should be laid on the Byzantine author.

Description of the most holy Great Church of God, spoken at the time of the dedication feast of the same most holy Church by the very learned deacon and Teacher of the Gospels, Michael of Thessalonica, who was also Master of the Orators.

1. Verily this temple of which the *encaenia* are being celebrated, as it is new in Christ, and, by virtue of the word of worship has not grown old, but remains in the same state and shall continue to do so in future, even though the gates of death (that is, the mouths of the heretics) gape against it, so is it new in its marvels, being so exceedingly great as it towers upwards like the mountains and leaves below all those things which art sets its hands to create, and so exceedingly beautiful as it shines forth, for all its age, as though it had been raised above time itself, and had not been immersed in its current. How its countenance flashes forth like liquid through the gold which is everywhere! The enduring newness in Christ of this building (even though its consecration is celebrated now) can be

5 cf. Iob, 38.17; Ps. 9:13; 106:18
13 ἡγρότης cod.

τοῖς θεωμένοις παρέχεται, ἔστι μὲν ιδέσθαι
 20 καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ ὡς ἕκαστα καταθρῆσαι
 καθ' ἑαυτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα, καὶ τὸ θαῦμα
 πάντοθεν συμφορεῖν. οὐ χεῖρον δὲ καὶ λόγῳ
 περιηγήσασθαι, ὅσον ἐνι, μὴ γὰρ τὸ πᾶν,
 25 ἐπεὶ καὶ μόγισ τοῦτ' αὐτό τις λόγου πρό-
 φασιν ἐνστησάμενος τῷ παντὶ ἐπεξίει, ποι-
 κίλως ἔχοντι καὶ μακρῶ.

2. Τὸν μὲν οὖν ἐξωτάτω περίβολον, καθ'
 ὃν ὁ πολύχαλκος κίων ἀνέχει τὸν ἐναέριον
 ἵππαστήν, ᾧ πολλὰ μὲν πολλαχόθεν ἐπι-
 30 συρίττουσιν πνεύματα καὶ ἀνέμων ἐπιτινάσ-
 σονται πτέρυγες, αὐτὸς δ' οὐδὲν ἀκούει τῶν
 ἀπειλῶν, ἀλλ' ὑπομυκόμενος ταυρηδὸν οἶον
 ἀνταπειλεῖται τοῖς ὀξέως τούτῳ προσβάλ-
 λουσι, τοῦτον τε οὖν περίβολον, καὶ τὴν ἐξ
 35 αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἱερὸν ὀρθίαν ἡρέμα ὑπανα-
 βαίνουσαν, πρὸς ἣν καὶ ἄλλαι πλείους ῥυμο-
 τομίαι συμβάλλουσιν, ἄλλη κατ' ἄλλο μέρος
 τῆς ἰθυτενείας αὐτῆς, καὶ μία πασῶν συν-
 ἔμπτωσις γίνεται πρὸς τὰ τοῦ οἴκου στενὰ
 40 ἔνθα τῷ νότῳ πύλαι ἀνοίγονται, ταῦτα
 παρήσειν δοκῶ μοι, τοῦ μετρίου φροντίζοντι,
 καὶ τὸν πρὸς Ἰέφυρον δὲ λουτήρα, τετρά-
 γωνον μὲν αὐτὸν καὶ καλόν, πλαισίῳ δὲ
 ἐναπειλημένον σχήματι στενωποῦ, ὡς περι-
 45 θέειν πάντοθεν τὸν λουτήρα, καὶ παρὰ τὰς
 εὐθείας ἅμα καὶ ἐγκαρσίας τοῦ περιέχοντος
 θεᾶσθαι καὶ τὰς αὐτοῦ μείον μέντοι ἐχούσας,
 Fol. ὅσον καὶ ὅλον ὅλου τοῦ περιγραφομένου τὸ
 123^v ἐγγραφόμενον ἐθέλει ἔλαττον || γίνεσθαι. καὶ
 50 μὴν τρίτη τις ἄλλη καὶ αὕτη τῶν τετρα-
 πλεύρων περιοχὴ τῷ δευτέρῳ συμπαρά-
 τείνεται στενωπῷ· μείζων τε αὐτῆς ἢ περί-
 μετρος, ὡς ἐξωτάτης οὔσης καὶ τελευτῆς. ἐκ
 γὰρ τῆς διαβάσεως ταύτης ἐπὶ τὸν μέσον
 55 εἰσιτιτόν ἐστι στενωπόν, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ γίνοιτ' ἂν
 εἰς τὰ ὑπαιθρα τοῦ λουτήρος, κάντεῦθεν εἰς
 τὸ ἱερὸν προτεμένισμα, ὅθεν ἐκβάς ὁ λόγος εἰς
 τοῦτο πάλιν ἐπανασέσωσται.

observed with spiritual vision; but the eternal novelty of wonder, which remains unaltered even for those who frequently visit the church and which it provides for the beholders by its grandeur and form and the costliness of the material—this can be seen with the eyes, so that all points can be scrutinized both in themselves and in their connection with each other, and admiration brought together from all sides. Nor is it less seemly to describe *the church* in words, as far as this is possible; not the whole of it, however, since one who had set forth this as the occasion of his discourse would have difficulty in going through the entire subject, it being so great and various.

2. The outermost enclosure indeed, at which the brazen column raises aloft the aerial horseman, against whom many gusts whistle from all sides and the winds flutter their pinions (he, however, does not hear their threats at all, but bellowing like a bull menaces in return, as it were, those who so fiercely attack him)—this enclosure, and the straight way which gently rises out of it towards the holy place, into which many other streets come together, different ones into different parts of its length, so that there is one conjunction of them all leading into the narrow spaces of the building, where doors open to the south—these things, it seems to me, I should pass by, since my care is for the mean. And likewise the *loutér* to the west—this is four-sided and beautiful and is encompassed by a border in the form of a narrow way, which goes around the *loutér* on all sides, so that one may see, alongside the straight and transverse *lines* of that which surrounds it, its own *sides* too which are smaller, inasmuch as the whole of what is included is wont to be less than the whole of that which circumscribes it. And another, a third compass of the four-sided figures is stretched out alongside the second narrow way; its perimeter is larger since it is the outermost and final one. From this passage one may enter the narrow way which is in the middle, and from this one may reach the open courtyard of the *loutér*, and thence go into the holy *protēmenisma*¹—whence my discourse having departed, it is again restored thither.

¹ I.e. the narthex.

3. Πυλῶν δὲ μεγέθη καὶ πλήθη καὶ
 60 λεπτουργίας χαλκοῦ, ὀρόφους τε κεκομψευ-
 μένους ψηφίδι καὶ τὰ ἐκ λατομίας κάλλη, ὅσα
 τε ἐν κίοσι καὶ ὅσα τοίχους ἐνδύουσιν (οὐδεὶς
 γὰρ τοίχος περιβολαίου γυμνός, λαΐνους
 χιτῶνας πάντων ἀμπισχομένων, ἵν' οὕτως
 65 εἴποιμι), παραιοτέρων καὶ ταῦτα διὰ τὸ προσ-
 κορὲς ἀναπλοῦν. ἀλλὰ τὸ πρὸ τοῦ τεμένους
 ἐκεῖνο μεταρσιώτερόν τε τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ, καὶ
 ἢ τοῦ χρυσοῦ στιλπνότης ἐγγὺς εἶναι τοῦ
 καταστάζειν ποιεῖ νομίζεσθαι τὸν χρυσόν.
 70 τοὺς γὰρ ὑγροὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῇ ἀνταυγείᾳ
 ὥσπερ κυμαίνουσα, τὰς ἐκείνων νοτίδας εἰς
 τὸν χρυσὸν ἐφάντασε τὸν ὀρώμενον, καὶ
 δοκεῖ ῥευσεῖσθαι τηκόμενος. λίθος δὲ ἀλλὰ
 ποδαπή περιπέπηγε τῇ οἰκοδομῇ, τῷ πολυ-
 75 χρώϊ καὶ λείῳ διαμιλλωμένη πρὸς τὸν χρυ-
 σόν, ἐκ μὲν λειότητος στίλβουσα, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ
 ἄνθους ὄντος ποικίλου πλέον τι ἔχουσα καὶ
 ὑπὲρ τὸν μονόχρουν χρυσόν.

4. Ἀλλὰ τί ταῦτα πρὸς τὰ ἐντὸς μεγέθη
 80 καὶ κάλλη τῆς ἀντιτύπου τῶν οὐρανίων
 σκηνῆς, ἣν ἄνθρωπος μὲν ἐπήξατο, Θεὸς δὲ
 πάντως τῆς ἐργασίας συνεπελάβετο; ἐκ
 μέσου γὰρ τοῦ προτεμένισματος συμβολικῶς
 εἰσόδων ἀναστομυμένων τριπλῶν (βατὰ
 85 γὰρ τὰ θεῖα τοῖς ἐν τριάδι τὸν ἕνα δεδι-
 दाγμένοις Θεόν) τῷ τὸν πολὺν ἄργυρον
 παραμείψαντι, ὃς ὑπαντᾷ πρὸς ταῖς εἰσόδοις
 εὐθύς, ὥς εἰς τὸ ἀχανὲς ὁ οἶκος ἀνέωγε, κύ-
 τους μὲν εὐρύτητα ἔχων ὥς πολλὰς ἀν-
 90 σωμάτων μυριάδας ἐγκυμονεῖν, ὕψους δὲ
 ὅσον τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνατρέψαντα κορυφὴν
 οἷον στῆσαι τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς. οὕτως οὐρανῷ
 ἐστήριξε κάρη χρῆμα τοῦτο ναοῦ, κὰν τὰς
 ῥίζας ἔβαλεν ἐπὶ γῆς· καὶ χειροποίητον
 95 ὄροφον χρυσὸς διελέγχει μὴ νομίζεσθαι κοσ-
 μικόν, ὃ μὲν γὰρ πολὺ χαλκὸς ὀνομάζεται,
 τῷ δὲ πολυχρύσῳ εἶναι συμβέβηκε· τάχα δὲ
 μιμεῖται καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ ἀπολαβὼν ἔνδον
 τὰς τῶν στοιχείων εἰκόνας, ὀλίγου δέει τοῦ
 100 μὴ κόσμον ποιεῖν. πύργοι μὲν γὰρ εὐφρεῖς,
 τέχνης εὐτορνοὶ περιαγωγαί, διαστάντες

3. The great size and number of the
 doors, and the delicacy of their brasswork;
 the ceilings, adorned with mosaic cubes; the
 beauties of quarried stonework, both that
 which is in the columns and that which revets
 the walls (for there is no wall which is naked
 of its covering, all of them being mantled
 round in stone cloaks, if I may so express it);
 these things must also be passed over, less
 satiety should arise. But that *structure* before
 the nave, loftier than those which are before
 it² [*lacuna*?] and the brightness of the gold
 almost makes the gold appear to drip down;
 for by its refulgence making waves to arise,
 as it were, in eyes that are moist, it causes
 their moisture to appear in the gold which is
 seen, and it seems to be flowing in a molten
 stream. But what manner of stonework is this
 that has fastened around the building, striv-
 ing with its variegated coloring and smooth-
 ness against the gold, shining because of its
 smoothness and, because of its diversified
 bloom having something that surpasses even
 the gold, which is of one color?

4. But what are these things, compared
 with the internal greatness and beauty of this
 antitype of the "tent of the heavens" which
 man indeed has set up, although God has
 surely taken part in the work? There being,
 symbolically, a triple entry yawning out of
 the middle of the *protomenisma* (for the holy
 places are accessible to those who have been
 taught that there is one God in the Trinity)
 towards him who passes by the great quantity
 of silver which at once meets him near the
 doors, the building lies open forming an im-
 mense space, having a hollowness so capacious
 that it might be pregnant with many thou-
 sands of bodies and a height so great as to turn
 the head, and make the eyes stop still as it were
 at the zenith. So has the pile of this church
 "planted its head in heaven," even though it
 has cast its roots into the earth; and the gold
 proves that the hand-wrought roof should not
 be considered as that of the world, for the
cosmic heaven has been named "the all-
 brazen," but this roof turns out to be "all-
 golden." Perchance it does indeed imitate
 heaven and, taking into itself the images of
 the elements, it hardly falls short of making a
 cosmos. For the beautiful piers, circuits of

63 cf. Il. 3, 57.

67 post πρὸ αὐτοῦ lacunam suspicor.

91 an <κατὰ> κορυφὴν legendum?

92 Il., 4, 443.

96 cf. Il., 5, 504; Od., 3, 2.

² I.e. the inner narthex.

τέσσαρες ἐκατέρωθεν οὐ πρὶν λήγουσιν ἢ
 εἰς ἑαυτοὺς τὸν ὄροφον ὑποδέξασθαι· τὰ δὲ
 μεταίχμια τούτων κίονες ὑψηλαί, αἱ μὲν ἐπ'
 105 εὐθείαν ἰοῦσαι γραμμὴν, αἱ δὲ χορευτικῶς
 οἶον ὡς ἐπὶ κύκλου πρὸς ἀλλήλας παρεγκλι-
 νόμεναι, τῷ διαφόρῳ τῆς στάσεως καὶ τῆς
 οἰκοδομῆς τὸ σχῆμα συνεξαμείβουσαι. τὰς
 κεφαλίδας δ' αὐταῖς γλυφὴ καὶ χρυσός, ἡ
 110 μὲν ἐλεπτούργησεν, ὁ δ' ἐκόσμησεν· αἱ μὲν
 τῇ χροῇ χλωρίζουσιν ὡς εἰ αὐτόθεν ἔφυσαν
 ἀπὸ γῆς, αἱ δ' ἐρυθραίνονται, πᾶσαι μικρὸν
 ὑποστιλόμεναι τῷ λευκῷ, χρυσᾷ δ' οὕτω
 καυσίας φοροῦσαι κατὰ τὸ παλαιὸν Περσικόν
 115 ἀναμερίζονται τὰ ἐπὶ τῶν κεφαλίδων ἡμί-
 στῳα, καὶ θάτερον μὲν τῆς περιαγωγῆς μέρος
 ἐκάστη διαναπαύει παρ' ἑαυτῇ, θάτερον δὲ εἰς
 τὴν γείτονα πέμπει καὶ αὕτη δέχεται. τὰ δ'
 ἐπ' αὐταῖς ὑπερῶα τοῖς κάτω συσχηματίζον-
 120 ται ἀκριβῶς, καὶ οὐδὲν ἔργον δις ποιεῖται περὶ
 ταυτό, πλὴν ὅτι κίων ἐπὶ κίονος βαίνει,
 μείων μὲν ἐπὶ μείονος, τὰ πλεῖστα δὲ καὶ τῇ
 φερούσῃ ὁμοφυῆς, ὥστ' εἴποισ ἂν γλυκύν
 φόρτον κορίσκην γίνεσθαι τῇ μητρί. πύργοι
 125 δ' ἀναβάντες ἐκείνοι τὸν μέγαν ὄροφον
 φέρουσιν, εἰς δύο τὸν πάντα συντελούμενον
 σφαῖρας, ἕαν τὰ πάντα σύνθωμαι, τὴν μὲν ὡς
 Fol. μείζω καὶ περιέξουσιν ἂν, τὴν δ' ὡς ἐλάττω
 124^r καὶ ἐνεσομένην τῷ περιέχοντι. || τὸ μὲν γὰρ
 130 πρὸς ἀπηλιώτην ἀνεγειρόμενόν τε ἅμα καὶ
 βαθυνόμενον σφαῖρας μεγίστης οἰμαί που
 τεταρτημόριον ὄν, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ζέφυρον
 ὁμοίως ὑποκολλούμενον, σύνδυο ταῦτα
 σφαῖρας τὸ ἥμισυ μετὰ τοῦ ἀνωτάτου
 135 ἡμισφαίριου μίαν σφαῖραν συνθήσουσιν·
 αὐτὴς δὲ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς αἱ γωνίαι καὶ ὡς
 εἰπεῖν εἰσοχαί, τετάρτῳ σφαῖρας ὀροφουμένη
 ἐκάστη, τέτταρες οὖσαι μίαν σφαῖραν συν-
 απαρτίζουσιν, ταύτην ἐλάττω τῆς προλα-
 140 βούσης. καὶ εἰ ἐλάττων, χωρήσει ἂν εἰς
 αὐτὴν (τὸ γὰρ δυνατόν γενέσθαι διδόσθω,
 κἂν μήπω φαίνεται) καὶ μιμήσται' ἂν οὕτως
 τὸ ὀρώμενον θέαμα τὸν τε πρῶτον καὶ ἀθέα-
 τον οὐρανόν, τὸν τε δεύτερον καὶ ὀρώμενον.
 145 μὴ γὰρ οὐκ ἔχει καὶ τῶν στοιχείων ἰν-
 δάλματα, ἵνα τις λέγειν αὐτὸ θαρρήσῃ, καὶ
 εἰκόνα κόσμου παντός; ἔστι μὲν ἅπλως ἐκάστη,
 τέτταρες δ' αὖται, στοιχεῖον ἐν ὑπο-
 γράφουσα· ἡ γὰρ γένεσις κύκλῳ καὶ συμ-

finely-finished workmanship, standing apart,
 four on either side, do not terminate before
 receiving the roof upon themselves, and in
 the spaces between are high columns, some
 going in a straight line, others as it were in a
 dancing fashion inclining towards each other
 on a circle, mutually complementing the plan
 of the building by the difference of their
 stance. Sculpture has finely worked their
 capitals, and gold has ornamented them.
 Some of them are greenish in color, as though
 they had grown out of the ground just there,
 others are reddish, and all are lightly speckled
 with white. Thus, wearing golden *kausiai* in
 the old Persian fashion, they divide between
 themselves the arches that rest on their capi-
 tals, and each one lets one part of the curve rest
 upon itself and transmits the other part to
 its neighbor, who receives it. The upper gal-
 leries which rest on these *columns* are exactly
 formed after the fashion of those below, and
 no task is performed twice for the same pur-
 pose, except that column goes on top of
 column, that is, a smaller on a greater, and
 for the most part the same in form as that
 which bears it, so that you might say that the
 daughter becomes a sweet burden to her
 mother. Those piers rising up bear the
 great roof, the whole of which is made up of
 two spheres, if I add all the *parts* together,
 one being larger so that it might contain *the*
other, the second smaller so that it might fit
 within that which comprehends it. For that
part which is raised up and hollowed out
 towards the east being, as seems to me, the
 fourth part of a very large sphere, as is also
 that which similarly curves out into a bay to
 westward:³ these two together being a hemi-
 sphere added to the hemisphere which is high-
 est of all, will make up one sphere. And again,
 the corners and, as one might say, recesses
 of the building,⁴ each one being roofed by the
 fourth part of a sphere, being four in number,
 together constitute one sphere, this one lesser
 than the previous one. And if the smaller will
 proceed into the other (for let that which is
 possible be granted even if it does not appear
 so), then in this way the spectacle that is *here*
 observed may imitate both the first, invisible
 heaven and the second that is visible. Does it
 not have too the images of the elements, if one

109-10 ἡ μὲν] ἡμῖν cod.

120 ποιεῖται] ποιεῖσθαι cod.

149ff. cf. Arist., *De gen. et corr.*, II 4,
 331a-b.

³ I.e. the eastern and western semidomes.

⁴ I.e. the four exedrae.

150 βάλλει τὰ τῶν σωμάτων ἀπλᾶ πρὸς ἄλληλα,
 συμβόλοις χρώμενα τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὁδοποιοῦσι
 ταῖς ἐξ ἀλλήλων γενέσεσιν. ὁθεν ἐκάστη ἀψις
 εἰς κύκλου σχῆμα κατακάμπτεσθαι βούλεται,
 καὶ συνάπτειν θέλει πρὸς τὴν ἐγγύς, καὶ οὕτω
 155 τὸ πᾶν μιμεῖται τὸ φιλοτέχνημα.

5. Καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄνω τοιαῦτα. τὰ δ' ἐκ
 πλαγίων πάντα χρυσός, πάντα λίθοι πολυ-
 ανθεῖς, ἀπ' ἀλλήλων μικροῖς φραγμοῖς δι-
 ειργόμενοι, οὓς ἔβαψε μὲν ἡ φύσις δευσοποιῶ
 160 τινὶ καὶ ὁλοσώμῳ βαφῇ, τέχνη δ' ἀπολε-
 ἀνασα τὸ τραχὺ μικροῦ καὶ λίθους ἔδωκε
 κάτοπτρα. οὕτως ὑπήκουσε λίθος ὁ κατὰ
 φύσιν σκληρὸς καὶ ἀναδύς ἀπὸ γῆς λαμπρόν
 τι μαρμαίρει καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖς προσηνές. στρώ-
 165 νυσι μὲν ἐδάφη, τοίχοις δὲ παραπέπηγε, καὶ
 πολλὰ τῶν ἀνθέων ὡς εὐμαράντων κατη-
 γορεῖ, ἐκ μετάλλων μὲν γῆς τμηθεὶς καὶ αὐτός,
 σφύλων δὲ τὸ ἀνθοβαφές καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐκ τῆς
 ἰδίας ρίζης τομήν. εἰς δ' αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκα
 170 ζῶσαν καθυποκρίνεται, τὴν χροάν μὲν ὑπο-
 λευκαίνόμενος, ὡς φλεβία δ' αἵματος ἀνε-
 στομώμενα πάντοσε δεικνύς ἑαυτοῦ· τοι-
 οὔτος ἂν ἀνδριᾶς πιθανῶς τὸν ἀνδρα
 ἐψεύσατο.

175 6. Εἶεν καὶ ταῦτα. τὸ δάπεδον δὲ πέλαγος
 οἶον καὶ τῷ πλατεῖ καὶ τῇ μορφῇ· κυάναεαι
 γὰρ τινες δῖναι τοῖς λίθοις ἀντικρυς ἐπεγεί-
 ρονται, ὡς εἰ καὶ λίθον καθῆκας εἰς ὕδωρ καὶ
 ἡρεμοῦν ἀνεκίνησας. τοῦτο τὸ πέλαγος
 180 ἀνέρρηξε κόλπον εἰς ἀναβαίνοντα ἥλιον, καὶ
 κύματος ὥσπερ ἐπιστοιβαζομένου τῷ προ-
 λαβόντι, καὶ ἄλλου ἐπ' ἄλλῳ (οὕτω γὰρ
 κάπτι τῶν ἐπικλύσεων γίνεται μὴ συγχωρου-
 μένου ἐξ ἀντιπνοίας τοῦ αἰεὶ ἐρχομένου κύμα-
 185 τος ῥήγνυσθαι), ἡ ἱερὰ σφενδόνη ἐβαθμιδώθη,
 καὶ ἄλλη βαθμὶς ἐπ' ἄλλη μετεωρίζεται· ταῖς
 δ' ἀνωτάτω βαθμίσι κυρτουμέναις κυματω-
 δῶς καὶ ἀργύρου χύσις ἐπεπλήμυρε πολυ-
 τάλαντος. τοῦτον τὸν θεῖον χῶρον ὁ μὴδὲ
 190 σταθμὸν καταδεχόμενος ἄργυρος περιφράτ-
 τει τε καὶ κοσμεῖ· τὰ μὲν κυλινδρικοῦ σχήματι
 δι' ἀργυροχόου τέχνης κιονωθείς, τὰ δ' ἐν

makes bold to say so, and a picture of the whole cosmos? Indeed, each arch (they are four in number) is here signifying one element. For the process of coming-to-be is circular and throws simple bodies towards each other; these, by using the same corresponding qualities pave the way to their genesis out of each other; accordingly each arch desires to be bent into the form of a circle, and to join with the nearest one, and so does this work of art imitate the whole universe.

5. So much for what is above. As for the sides—all is gold, all flowering stones separated from each other by little partitions. These stones nature has dipped in a fast and full-bodied dye, and art, by polishing their roughness, has almost turned them into mirrors. Thus has the stone, which is hard by nature, yielded, and, having emerged from the earth, it sparkles brilliantly and agreeably to the eyes. It paves the floors and has been fixed round the walls, and in many respects convicts the flowers of being easily withered, since it is also cut from the mines of the earth, but preserves its flowery dye even after severance from its own root. One of these stones even puts on the guise of living flesh, and, whitish in color, displays all over itself what look like gaping veins of blood. A statue of such *material* would be a plausible counterfeit of a man.

6. So much for these matters. The floor is like the sea, both in its width and in its form; for certain blue waves are raised up against the stone, just as though you had cast a pebble into water and had disturbed its calm. This sea has broken out into a gulf to eastward, and one wave having been, as it were, piled up against its predecessor, and another against the next (for thus also does it happen during floods, the ever-approaching wave never allowing itself to be broken by the contrary wind), the sacred *sphendonē* has been formed into steps, and one step is raised up above another, and the highest steps which curve in billows have been flooded over by an effusion of silver worth many talents. Silver, exceeding all measure, has fenced round and adorned this holy place, here fashioned into columns of cylindrical form, wrought with the silversmiths' art, there made into a pyramid on a tetragonal base—or rather conical in

176-7 cf. CIG 3797 (Chalcedone); Xenarch. ap. Athen. II 64.

τετραγώνῳ βάσει πυραμιδούμενος, ἢ μᾶλλον
 κωνοειδῆς καὶ τετραγώνου τὸ παρὰ τὰς
 195 γωνίας ἄλλο βάσιν ποιούμενος, ἵν' ἐπὶ κύ-
 κλου βαῖνοι, τὸν κώνου νόμον, ὃ μὴ πέπονθε
 πυραμῖς, ναὶ μήν, καὶ εἰς τετραπέδου λίθου
 σχῆμα μεταβαλὼν καὶ λεῦγμα γεγενημένος
 ταῖς κιόσιν. ἢ τε θεῖα καὶ εὐρυχωροτάτη
 200 ληνὸς ἥς ἔνδον ὁ μυστικός ἀποθλίβεται οἶνος
 κύκλῳ περὶ τὴν ἰδίαν στεφάνην ἀργυροῦς
 ἐθρέψατο βότρυας ἐλαίου στάζοντας, ἀλλ'
 Fol. οὐ γλεῦκους, διότι μήπω || περκάζουσι, μηδὲ
 124^v γλαυκοὺς αὐτοὺς ἐπαλείψας ἔθηκεν ὁ χρόνος,
 205 ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ πρὸς τὴν ἄλλην χύσιν ἀντιλευκαί-
 νονται τοῦ χρυσοῦ.

7. Ἐὼ τὰ κεκαλυμμένα μένειν ἐπὶ τοῦ σχή-
 ματος ἀθεώρητα καὶ τῷ λόγῳ καταλείπων
 αὐτά, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ ἔδαφος *** πέλᾳγος ἐξ οὗ
 210 φαμέν ἀποκολπωθῆναι νόμῳ πελάγους τὸ
 θεῖον ἄδυτον. ἔστι τις ἰσθμὸς ἐντεῦθεν· ἐκεῖ
 διάβασις, καὶ προσοκέλλει τούτῳ ὁ ἱερὸς
 ὀκρίβας, καθάπερ εἰ τις φορτίς, ἵνα δ' ἀκύν-
 μαντος μένη καὶ ἀργυρᾶς ἀγκύρας τὰς κίονας
 215 ἄνωθεν χαλᾷ πρὸς τὸ ἔδαφος· ἐνεπορεύσατο
 δὲ καὶ τὸν πολὺν ἄργυρον ἢ φορτίς. τί ἂν
 λέγοιμι καὶ περὶ πρισμάτων, δι' ὧν ἀνα-
 βαίνειν ἔστι εἰς τὸν ὀκρίβαντα, καὶ τὴν
 λοιπὴν ποικιλίαν τῆς ὀροφύσης ὕλης αὐτόν,
 220 κώνους πολυστεφάνους, κύκλῳ χορεύοντας
 στοάς, πολὺπλευρον σκάριφον, πυλίδιά τινα
 ἐκπεριόντα καὶ κύκλων ἡμίση καὶ ἐπικύκλων
 διχοτομήματα, τὰ πάντα χρυσίῳ μορφα-
 ζόμενον ἄργυρον; πῶς δ' ἂν μὴ ἔξω τοῦ μέτρου
 225 πέσοιμι, διαγράφειν ἐθέλων καὶ τὰς χρυσοῦς
 ὄντως πετέργας τῆς ἀμωμήτου περιστερᾶς
 τῆς ἐκκλησίας; φημί ἐκείνην, τὴν ἀντιπέρας·
 ταύτην, τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς. ἀλλὰ φέρε, μύρῳ τὴν
 τοιαύτην χρίσας ἀπολύσω περιστερὰν, καὶ
 230 τοῦτο γὰρ εὐκαίρως παρομιιάσομαι. ποῦ τὸ
 μύρον; τίς ἡμῖν ἄλλος χρήσει, ἔαν μὴ Δαβὶδ,
 ὁ σήμερον ἂν εἰπὼν, ὡς μύρον ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς;

form and having as its base that other *figure*
 beside the corners of the tetragon (?), so that
 it may rest on a circle in the manner of a cone,
 which a pyramid will not allow of,—indeed,
 taking also the form of a four-sided stone⁵ and
 becoming that which binds the columns to-
 gether. And the holy and very capacious
 trough, wherein the mystical wine is pressed
 out, has nourished bunches of silver grapes
 around its own rim which drip with oil, but
 not with must, because they have not yet
 ripened, nor has time put a dark blue patina
 on them, but they show all the whiter against
 the effusion of gold elsewhere.

7. I am allowing those things which are
 covered over to remain unobserved in this
schéma, and, abandoning them in my dis-
 course, [I return] to the floor, the sea out of
 which we have said the holy sanctuary has
 been scooped, as the sea would do it. From
 there is a certain isthmus; at this spot there
 is a passage, and the holy tribune comes to
 shore at the isthmus, just as though it were
 a cargo-vessel, and that it may rest untossed
 by the waves, it lowers from above its anchors
 of silver, the columns, down to the ground.
 And the cargo-vessel has ferried in the great
 quantity of silver. What should I say about
 the steps, by which one may go up into the
 tribune, and the further varied material which
 roofs it over—many-wreathed cones, *stoas*
 dancing in a circle, a pattern with many sides,
 little gates which go out and around, halves
 of circles and epicycles cleft in two, all of
 silver whose form has been wrought with
 gold? How should I not fall away from the
 mean, wishing also to describe the wings,
 truly golden, of the blameless dove of the
 church? I mean that one, opposite to us; this
 one that is with us. But come now, having
 anointed it with myrrh, I shall release the
 dove. And indeed, I shall be using this prov-
 erb at a timely moment. Where is the
 myrrh? Who else will deliver to us the oracle,
 if it be not David, he who would say today,
 “as is myrrh upon the head. . . ?”

197 τετραπέδου] fort. τετραπόδου

209 Verbum excidisse videtur.

219 λοιπὴν] lectio dubia.

221 σκάριφος cod.

229 cf. Gen. 8:8–12.

231 ἄλλο cod.

232 Ps. 132:2.

⁵ Or “four-footed stone” if we read τετρα-
 πόδου. Michael is referring to the flat sides of the
 ciborium which may have been arched, in which
 case the spandrels could be called “feet.” But
 cf. Greg. Naz., *Orat.* XVIII, PG 35, col. 1037 B
 (λίθου τετραπέδου).

COMMENTARY

Byzantine literature has given us few comprehensive descriptions of St. Sophia. The principal ones are Procopius' *De aedificiis*, the pseudo-Homeric poem by Paul the Silentiary, and the legendary *Diegesis*.¹ To these we must now add the *ekphrasis* by Michael of Thessalonica. The significance of this text is twofold: it provides information of an archaeological nature and at the same time gives us a symbolical interpretation of the church building. As has been pointed out by Grabar and other scholars,² the symbolism of the Byzantine church is, broadly speaking, of three kinds: scriptural-topographical, theological, and cosmic. The first explains the form and furnishings of the church in terms of the places sanctified by Christ's earthly life, in other words as a miniature Holy Land; the second, in terms of theological concepts such as the trinity of the Godhead or the two natures of Christ; the third regards the church, like Moses' tabernacle, as a small-scale model of the universe. The first two interpretations predominate in the Byzantine expositions of the church and the liturgy, such as those of pseudo-Germanus, Theodore of Andida, and Symeon of Thessalonica. The cosmic explanation, on the other hand, is seldom found in Byzantine texts, except for the banal comparison of the dome to the vault of heaven. Its most consistent application to a specific church occurs in a Syriac hymn of the seventh century describing the cathedral of Edessa.³ It is of some interest, therefore, that Michael of Thessalonica should have recourse principally to the cosmic explanation, with but a brief allusion to the theological one, when he compares to the Trinity the three doors leading from the central bay of the narthex into the nave (4. 83 ff.).

There is, however, a profound difference between Michael's cosmological notions and those expressed in the Syriac hymn. The

Syrian imagines the universe as it was delineated by Cosmas Indicopleustes, namely as a rectangular box with four vertical walls and a vaulted lid representing the "heaven of heavens." Such ideas must naturally have seemed rather naive to the intellectuals of Constantinople, who held the *Christian Topography* in low repute; Photius dismisses it in a few caustic sentences.⁴ Michael's universe is spherical, like that of Ptolemy; more exactly, it consists of two concentric spheres, representing the visible and the invisible heaven. To arrive at this comparison, he uses a somewhat strained argument. By adding the eastern and western semidomes to the main dome of St. Sophia, he obtains a sphere, the outer or invisible heaven. Then he adds up the semidomes of the four exedrae and obtains a smaller sphere which, for the sake of argument, as he puts it, could be regarded as being contained within the larger one. The smaller sphere is the visible heaven. The four arches supporting the main dome represent the four elements; they are curved and joined to one another, just as the process of generation or coming-to-be is a cyclical one and depends on the corresponding qualities (σύμβολα) of elements which are next to one another.⁵ The resemblance of St. Sophia to the cosmos is therefore metaphorical rather than concrete.

Michael's description follows a well-defined route. From the Augusteon, the south forecourt of St. Sophia, he moves to the atrium and thence into the narthex and nave. After dwelling on general features of the structure, decoration, and pavement, he takes us to the sanctuary, and then to the solea and the ambo.

The following remarks are intended to analyse the specific information furnished by Michael of Thessalonica concerning different parts of St. Sophia. I have made no attempt to discuss the highly stereotyped conventions and rhetorical devices of the *ekphrasis*. For purposes of literary comparison we may quote, in addition to Procopius and Paul the Silentiary, the description of the Pharos church by the Patriarch Photius,⁶ two sermons by the

¹ Ed. Th. Preger, *Script. orig. Constantinop.*, I (Leipzig, 1901), pp. 74-108.

² "Le témoignage d'une hymne syriaque sur l'architecture de la cathédrale d'Edesse," *Cahiers archéologiques*, II (1947), p. 54 ff. Cf. O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* (London, 1948), p. 15 f.

³ French trans. by A. Dupont-Sommer, *Cahiers archéologiques*, II (1947), p. 29 ff.

⁴ *Bibliotheca*, cod. 36.

⁵ Aristotle, *De gen. et corr.*, II, 4.

⁶ Bonn ed., along with Codinus, *Excerpta de antiquitatibus*, p. 194 ff.; English trans. by C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, III (1958), p. 177 ff.

Emperor Leo VI,⁷ the poem of Constantine Rhodius,⁸ the description of the Holy Apostles by Nicholas Mesarites,⁹ of the Augustineon by Pachymeres,¹⁰ etc., while Michael's geometrical intricacies call to mind those of Choricus.¹¹

1. *Exordium*. Cf. Leo VI, Homily 28:¹² the immaterial or spiritual beauty of the church can be expressed only by the heavenly spirits; but the visible beauty of the church can and should be expressed in fairness to its architect. Pachymeres on the other hand¹³ and Manuel Chrysoloras¹⁴ declare that the beauty of St. Sophia is altogether inexpressible and mystical.

2. *The Augustineon*. Note the use of the term περίβολος. After the sixth century the Augustineon is always referred to as a court of St. Sophia, and not as a forum. Terms such as προαύλιον, αὐλή, αὐλαία, etc., are usually applied to it.¹⁵ The "aerial horseman" is Justinian's, or rather Theodosius' famous equestrian statue set up on a high pillar.¹⁶ The

term πολύχαλκος refers to the bronze revetment of the column shaft¹⁷ which was removed by the Crusaders.¹⁸ The statement that the route from the Augustineon to the portals of St. Sophia ran gradually uphill is quite accurate. Today the slope is not apparent (in fact, one steps down into the courtyard of St. Sophia), but it must be remembered that the original pavement of the Augustineon lies about 2.50 m. below the present street level.

2. 42 ff. *The Atrium*. Michael's account is, unfortunately, very obscure. I do not understand precisely what he means by the three borders or passages that encompassed the *loutér*, or by the straight and transverse lines. Nor is it entirely clear whether he uses the term *loutér* to denote the atrium as a whole, or merely its fountain; if the latter, we must conclude that the fountain was rectangular.¹⁹ Paul the Silentiary says that the fountain was made of Iassian stone and that the water gushed from a bronze pipe.²⁰ According to the *Diegesis*,²¹ the fountain had twelve "stoas" and stone lions out of whose mouths the water spouted. The Persian version of the *Diegesis* made in the late fifteenth century states that the fountain was of a single piece of red stone, and was surmounted by a cupola within which were images of Christ with the twelve apostles and of the emperors from Constantine to Justinian. Around the fountain were eight cypress trees.²²

3. 60. On the "delicacy of the brass-work," see *supra*, "Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute," p. 210 ff.

3. 66 ff. *The Inner Narthex* ("the structure before the *temenos*, loftier than those

⁷ Ed. Akakios, Λέοντος τοῦ Σοφοῦ πανυγηρικοί (sic) λόγοι (Athens, 1868), pp. 243 ff., 274 ff. Cf. A. Frolow, "Deux églises byzantines d'après des sermons peu connus de Léon VI le Sage," *Études byzantines*, III (1945), p. 43 ff.

⁸ Ed. E. Legrand, *Rev. des ét. grecques*, IX (1896), p. 32 ff.

⁹ Ed. G. Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites, Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles," *Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, N.S., XLVII, pt. 6 (1957), p. 855 ff.

¹⁰ Bonn ed., along with Nicephorus Gregoras, II, p. 1217 ff.

¹¹ *Laud. Marciani I*, § 18 ff.; *Laud. Marciani II*, § 37 ff. (*Choricii Gazaei opera* ed. Foerster-Richtsteig [Leipzig, 1929], pp. 7 ff., 37 ff. (Cf. G. Downey, "Description of the Church of S. Stephen at Gaza," in E. Baldwin Smith, *The Dome* (Princeton, 1950), p. 155 ff.

¹² Ed. Akakios, p. 244.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 1218.

¹⁴ *Veteris ac Novae Romae comparatio*, PG 156, cols. 48-9.

¹⁵ Cf. R. Guiland in 'Επετηρίς Ἑταιρ. Βυζαντ. Σπουδῶν, XVIII (1948), p. 161 ff.; C. Mango, *The Brazen House* (Arkæologisk-kunsthist. Meddelelser, Kong. Danske Videnskab. Selskab, IV, 4 [Copenhagen, 1959]), p. 46 and note 56.

¹⁶ The voluminous bibliography on this monument is given by Phyllis Williams Lehmann, "Theodosius or Justinian?" *The Art Bulletin*, XLI (1959), p. 39 ff.; cf. my remarks on Mrs. Lehmann's article, *ibid.*, p. 351 ff. For yet another mediaeval reference to this monument see M. Izeddin, "Un texte arabe inédit sur

Constantinople byzantine," *Journal asiatique*, CCXLVI, pt. 4 (1958), p. 453 ff.

¹⁷ Procopius, *De aed.*, I, ii, 3-4; Cedrenus, I, pp. 656-7.

¹⁸ Nicephorus Gregoras, I, p. 276; Pachymeres, *op. cit.*, p. 1218.

¹⁹ On the *loutér* see esp. Beljaev, *Byzantina*, II (St. Petersburg, 1893), p. 103 ff.; Millet in *Bull. de corr. hell.*, XXIX (1905), p. 114 f.; Ebersolt, *Ste-Sophie de Constantinople* (Paris, 1910), p. 5.

²⁰ *Descr. S. Sophiae*, vv. 594 ff. (ed. P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius* [Leipzig and Berlin, 1912], p. 244).

²¹ P. 103.

²² F. Tauer, "Les versions persanes de la légende sur la construction d'Aya Sofya," *Byzantinoslavica*, XV (1954), p. 14.

which are before it"). The description of the narthex is couched in generalities. For the optical illusion created by the gold of the vaults (the transference of the spectator's agitation to the object seen), cf. Photius description of the Pharos church: "For the spectator, through his whirling about in all directions and being constantly astir, which he is caused to experience by the variegated spectacle on all sides, imagines that his personal condition is transferred to the object."²³

4. 86ff. *The Nave*. The "great quantity of silver" probably refers to the Imperial Door. The present wooden leaves of the door presumably date from 1847-49,²⁴ and not from the late thirteenth century as suggested by Antoniadēs.²⁵ That the original door was of silver is confirmed by Constantine Porphyrogenitus and other sources.²⁶ The author of the *Diegesis* states that this door was of gilded silver.²⁷

4. 105. The "dance" of the columns (in the exedrae). Cf. Procopius, *De aed.*, I, i, 35 (ὥσπερ ἐν χορῷ ἀλλήλοις ὑπεξιστάμενοι).

4. 113. Golden *kausiae*. This refers to the gilding of the capitals.²⁸ It is recorded that Romanus III (1028-34) adorned the capitals of St. Sophia with gold and silver.²⁹

²³ Bonn ed., p. 198; trans. Mango, p. 186. On this topic see O. Wulff, "Das Raumerlebnis des Naos im Spiegel der Ekphrasis," *BZ*, XXX (1929/30), p. 531ff.

²⁴ See Tito Lacchia, *I Fossati architetti del Sultano di Turchia* (Rome, 1943), p. 94.

²⁵ *Ἐκφράσις τῆς Ἀγίας Σοφίας, I (Athens, 1907), p. 178.

²⁶ *De ceremoniis*, Bonn ed., I, p. 192. Cf. Ebersolt, *Ste-Sophie*, p. 3, note 2. See also Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie liturgiĭeskich rukopisej*, I (Kiev, 1895), pp. 156-7; *Synax. eccles. Constantin.*, ed. Delehayē (*Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Nov.*), 231₄₅. A drawing of the interior of St. Sophia looking west is preserved in Cod. Barb. lat. 4426, fol. 46^r, and is said to have been copied from an original by Ciriaco of Ancona. It shows the valves of the Imperial Door divided into rectangular panels, each panel containing a cup represented in relief. The accuracy of this drawing is, however, subject to grave doubt. See Carlo Bertelli, "Notizia preliminare sul restauro di alcune porte di S. Sofia a Istanbul," *Boll. dell' Ist. Centrale del Restauro*, XXXIV-XXXV (1958), p. 111 and fig. 84.

²⁷ P. 97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²⁹ Cedrenus, Bonn ed., II, p. 497.

6. 175ff. *The pavement*.³⁰ The general configuration of the pavement is probably the same today as it was in the twelfth century, except for patches due to the collapse of 1346, the removal of the chancel barrier, the ambo, and the solea, and other changes made by the Turks. The pavement consists of matched slabs of Proconnesian marble that were divided by at least five strips of verd antique placed transversely across the nave at somewhat irregular intervals.³¹ These are probably the "blue waves" which Michael compares to the ripples caused by the dropping of a stone into a body of still water. Properly speaking, his metaphor would call for concentric ripples, but we should not look for such literal correspondence. The dark strips were usually called "rivers." Theodore of Andida, on comparing the bishop's entrance to Christ's appearance at the river Jordan, says, "For this reason, it seems, the name of rivers (ποταμοί) is given to the strips of dark marble that lie in the floor of the Great Church like ruled lines (δίκην ὀρθίνων) spaced at moderate intervals from one another."³² A Sinaitic manuscript (no. 286) mentions the third "river" (τρίτον ποτάμιον), counting from the east, in connection with the service of December 22nd.³³ The *Diegesis*, on the other hand, speaks of four strips (ῥίνας) as having been allegedly made by Justinian to represent the four rivers of paradise and to serve as stations for penitents.³⁴ Further on, however, the same text adds that another floor was laid after the collapse of the dome (in 558); this consisted of Proconnesian marble representing the earth and green marble "in likeness of the rivers that enter the sea."³⁵

6. 180ff. *The Apse*. Continuing his nautical metaphor, Michael compares the apse

³⁰ On Byzantine descriptions of pavements see Frolov, *op. cit.*, p. 55ff.

³¹ I owe this information to Mr. R. L. Van Nice. The pavement of St. Sophia remained covered with carpets until 1934-5, when the building was transformed into a museum. Antoniadēs was able to note only one strip of verd antique between the great western piers (*op. cit.*, II, p. 37); the same observation is repeated by E. H. Swift, *Hagia Sophia* (New York, 1940), p. 71.

³² PG 140, col. 436C.

³³ Dmitrievskij, *op. cit.*, I, p. 157.

³⁴ Pp. 102-03; note appar. to 102₁₃: *quatuor autem venas virides*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-08.

to a gulf, the synthronon to breakers rising one above the other, the solea to an isthmus and the ambo to an anchored freighter. This last represents a variation on the imagery of the Silentiary, who compares the ambo to an island, or rather a peninsula joined by a narrow neck of land to the continent (the raised sanctuary).³⁶ *The synthronon*. This appears to have consisted of seven steps³⁷ with a semi-circular passage underneath, as in St. Irene. Michael's indication that the upper steps were covered with silver is confirmed by Paul the Silentiary.³⁸ *The chancel-barrier*. Michael merely mentions its silver columns, a detail previously known from the Silentiary³⁹ and other sources. *The ciborium*. From the Silentiary's detailed description⁴⁰ we learn that the ciborium was made of silver and consisted of four columns supporting an eight-sided pyramidal roof. Michael appears to be saying the same things, but in a more muddled way. Compare also Photius' account of the ciborium of the Pharos church,⁴¹ and that of the church of the Holy Apostles by Mesarites.⁴² *The lēnos*. This object, a large trough or basin decorated around its rim with a vine motif in silver, does not appear to be mentioned in other sources. It must have been used for the preparation or mixing (rather than for the "pressing out") of the eucharistic wine, a rite that is normally carried out in the prothesis. It is known that St. Sophia had no distinct prothesis, such as is found in later Byzantine churches; whether any particular part of St. Sophia, as distinct from the sanctuary, was used as a prothesis is a subject that has often been discussed, but no definite conclusion has been reached.⁴³ Antoniadès sums up his views

on the position of the prothesis as follows: "At the time of Justinian it may have been in the left-hand side of the bema, i. e. within the precincts of the sanctuary; between 574 and 1317 the prothesis may have been in the form of a conch outside the northeast wall, but this is not very plausible; and between 1317 and 1453 it was, it appears, in the north aisle."⁴⁴ In view of this uncertainty, Michael's mention of the *lēnos* is of some interest. Although he does not specify where this was placed, it would appear from the context that it was in the sanctuary proper and that it was a permanent fixture.

7. 211 ff. *The isthmus*. The same term is used by Paul the Silentiary with reference to the solea.⁴⁵ *The ambo*. Michael mentions the following features: *The silver columns*. These are the eight columns supporting the platform of the ambo.⁴⁶ *The steps*, i. e. the two flights of stairs, east and west, leading up to the platform. *The varied material of the roof*. According to the Silentiary's description, the ambo had no canopy. Whether a canopy was subsequently added,⁴⁷ or whether Michael is referring to the wooden architrave of the peristyle, it would be difficult to say. *The cones with many crowns* are probably the ornamental trees of conical shape.⁴⁸ *The many-sided outline*. The term σκάριφος is probably used to mean "groundplan."⁴⁹ According to the Silentiary's account, the platform of the ambo was elliptical in shape,⁵⁰ while the surrounding peristyle consisted of two semicircles.⁵¹ Such

pp. 75–6; Beljaev, *Byzantina*, II, p. 116 ff.; Antoniadès, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 131–42; Ebersolt, *Ste-Sophie*, pp. 20–21.

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, II, p. 142.

⁴⁵ *Descr. ambonis*, v. 235. On the solea see Xydis in *The Art Bulletin*, XXIX (1947), p. 11 ff.

⁴⁶ Paul Silent., *Descr. ambonis*, v. 105 ff.

⁴⁷ The last ambo of St. Sophia, described in 1403 by Clavijo (*Embassy to Tamerlane*, trans. Guy Le Strange [London, 1928], p. 74) did have a canopy: cf. tentative reconstruction by Antoniadès, *op. cit.*, II, p. 62.

⁴⁸ Paul Silent., *Descr. ambonis*, v. 195 ff. On tree-shaped candelabra see Grabar, "Quelques observations sur le décor de l'église de Qartāmin," *Cahiers archéologiques*, VIII (1956), p. 86 ff.

⁴⁹ Cf. Mark the Deacon, *Vie de Porphyre*, § 75, ed. Grégoire and Kugener (Paris, 1930), p. 60 and note 2; additional note, p. 132.

⁵⁰ *Descr. ambonis*, vv. 58–60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vv. 130–4.

³⁶ *Descr. ambonis*, v. 224 ff.

³⁷ *Diegesis*, p. 94.

³⁸ *Descr. S. Sophiae*, v. 365 ff. Antoniadès, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 127–8, incorrectly assumes that all the steps were covered with silver.

³⁹ *Descr. S. Sophiae*, v. 689.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 720 ff.

⁴¹ Bonn ed., p. 198; trans. Mango, pp. 186–7.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, § 38. 6.

⁴³ J. M. Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church*, I (London, 1850), pp. 240–1; E. Freshfield, "On Byzantine Churches, and the Modifications made in their Arrangement owing to the Necessities of the Greek Ritual," *Archaeologia*, XLIV (1873), pp. 383–92; Lethaby and Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople* (London and New York, 1894),

an arrangement explains Michael's reference to "half-circles" and his mention of little doors which may have been the two doors (southeast and northwest) opening through the peristyle;⁵² but it does not account for the "many-sided outline" or for the "segments of epicycles." An *epikykos* is, properly speaking, a small circle whose center lies on the circumference of a larger circle, so that Michael appears to be speaking of exedra-like projections from a circular space. By a strange coincidence Lethaby and Swainson's reconstruction of the ambo shows a platform with two exedra-like projections,⁵³ an arrangement that is not substantiated by Paul the Silentiary. Antoniadès reconstructs a circular ambo, and Xydis an

elliptical one. In view of Michael's description, we should perhaps postulate a partial reconstruction of the ambo between the sixth and the twelfth century.

7. 225 ff. *The Dove*. The concluding reference to a dove, cryptic as it is, appears to apply to a specific object ("I mean that one, opposite to us"). A golden dove did in fact hang over the holy table of St. Sophia.⁵⁴ Cf. also the golden doves decorated with precious stones in the church of the Pharos.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Antony of Novgorod in Mme B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient* (Geneva, 1889), p. 92; cf. Lethaby and Swainson, *op. cit.*, p. 72; Antoniadès, *op. cit.*, II, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Nikolaos Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. A. Heisenberg (Würzburg, 1907), p. 35; cf. Ebersolt, *Le grand palais de Constantinople* (Paris, 1910), p. 108.

⁵² *Ibid.*, v. 173 ff.

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, p. 54.